

## Developing your sales pitch / elevator pitch

There is a whole world of advice out there regarding how you can sell your business in a minute or so. Most networking events and meetings give the opportunity to sum up what you are about and to attract interested individuals in the room.

The purpose of this document is to support you to develop a clear, accurate and passionate pitch for such events. However, be warned - there is no short cut to that one winning statement that will have prospective customers - unless you have a product or service that is universally required and are in a situation where it is needed, there is no such thing. Think for a moment - we do not ask for the fire fighter's elevator pitch before they stop our house burning down!

### Describing your product/service

How do you describe your business?

- Start by writing down 50 words that describe your product/service (either descriptive words or short statements).
- If possible ask someone else close to your business (partner, member of staff) to do the same task.
- Compare the word lists - where are the similarities and differences? Have you chosen different ways to express the same thing?
- Next, identify three of your key customers and ask them to describe your product/service.
- Once you have received these compare them with the descriptions written by yourself and business associate, again identify the similarities and differences - change your words to reflect theirs! These are the kinds of people you are hoping to interest with your pitch!
- If your customers use a different word to describe an aspect of your business use that one - especially if it has come up more than once.

This process will enable you to describe your product/service in terms that are meaningful for your current and therefore your prospective customers.



Once you have your product description you can use it to promote your product/services in a range of places - networking forums, chamber listings, directories of services etc. When appropriate you may wish to alter your words to fit a particular market. If you are listing as part of an Engineering site, you may wish to go through the above process again, focussing on your customers from that market.

### Perfecting the elevator pitch

Once you have a clear description of your product you can move on to crafting your elevator pitch. Again, this is not a one size fits all exercise. Your pitch will be dependant on a number of criteria:

1. Who are the audience
2. What do they want to know
3. Timing
4. The outcome that you want from each "pitch"

#### 1. Who are the audience?

As with many things a good sales or elevator pitch is dependant on excellent preparation. Different audiences will have different hot buttons, use different types of language and be engaged by different aspects of your product. Therefore it is imperative that you find out as much as possible about your audience as possible **BEFORE** you craft your pitch.

**Put yourself in their shoes** -what would that particular group want to know, should you use technical or lay language? What problems, specific to that group can your product or service resolve?

This is a good time to **revisit the research you undertook for your 50 words** - how do your current customers describe you? Do your current customers have things in common with the group that you will be speaking to?

When addressing conferences or in a sales meeting, make sure that you have undertaken some **research on issues that may be affecting that particular group or organisation and make reference to it**. This tells your audience that you are interested in them and rather than trying to sell them something!



When describing a problem, use **inclusive language** (“when we struggle with staff retention”, rather than “when you....”), again this helps you to develop rapport with the audience.

## 2. What do they want to know?

We all perceive the world from our own perspective. When an audience member is listening to your sales pitch they will be intuitively listening for what is in it for them. As audience members, if we cannot see what is in it for us, we quickly switch off (a vegetarian is unlikely to listen intently to a sales pitch for organic meat!)

To keep an audience’s attention we need to ensure that our message has meaning for them. Use **examples that the audience will relate to**, reference a problem that is specific to, and has meaning for, that group.

When describing a problem, use **inclusive language** (when we struggle with staff retention, rather than when you....), again this helps you to develop rapport with the audience and allows them to feel that you understand their position.

## 3. Timing

This one is simple - **keep within the time you have been allotted!** Audiences can lose interest if they feel that you are taking more of their time than they have chosen to give! In certain circumstances you may be asked to stop mid sentence! This will make you look ill prepared and leave the audience with a negative perception of your product/service.

The only truly accurate way to ensure that you stay within the allotted timescale is to practice your pitch aloud and in full. Ideally do this in front of someone else, but if this is not possible practice in front of a mirror. This is the only accurate way to judge the length of your presentation.



#### 4. Outcomes - tell your audience what you would like them to do next!

Finish your pitch with a call to arms! Tell the audience what you would like them to do next, how they can take immediate action based on your pitch. For example you might:

- ask the audience to text a number there and then to sign up for a free resource
- fill in the response card left on their chair
- take a brochure and demonstration CD

People are far more likely to take action “in the moment” - give your audience an opportunity to do so then and there. You are far more likely to get an interested response at the time than if individuals have to remember you and take action independently later.

#### In Summary:

- Use existing knowledge - find out how your customers would describe your business
- Research - know your audience each and every time and make changes to your pitch to reflect who they are
- Reflect your audience’s needs in your pitch - address their problems rather your solutions!
- Respect your audience’s time! Practice and ensure that you stick to agreed time limits.
- Tell your audience how to take action. If appropriate, give them the means to do so immediately.